

Sound of Film: 105 seconds

June 2, 1966

For One Man's Opinion

In Maryland, our legislature meets for 70 days at the beginning of each year. The term of the meeting is specified by ~~the~~ an anachronistic constitution drafted in 1867. Unless called into special session, that is the extent of the legislature's activities.

It is a physical impossibility for even the most brilliant legislature to properly review a 3/4 billion dollar budget and pass on the merits of almost 2,000 single legislative bills in 70 days.

I strongly believe that to effectively direct investigations into the problems of the state, and to initiate and draft legislation to meet these problems, particularly to stop the constant running to Washington to meet every local problem, we must have ---as part of a broad program of legislative reforms --- a realistic length of time during which our representatives can transact the vital business of the state.

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I can tell you from 6 1/2 years of personal experience, that during the hectic days and hours at the close of the session, after numerous day and night sessions, good legislation too often is killed and bad legislation too often slips by.

The quality, the complexity of modern legislation makes it tremendously unwise, if not impossible, to attempt to legislate during a session whose duration is based on a rigid straight-jacket devised in the 19th Century. I think we need flexibility in the length of our legislative session.

That's one man's opinion.

End

STATEMENT, WBAL-TV, DECEMBER 1, 1966: GEORGE S. WILLS

THE CITIZENS OF MARYLAND ARE NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POLITICAL BIRTHRIGHT OF LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION IN ANAPOLIS. NO ONE IS TRYING TO STEAL THAT BIRTHRIGHT. BUT, SLOWLY AND SURELY, PRACTICES THAT NO MODERN BUSINESS WOULD TOLERATE ARE DESTROYING MARYLAND'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CITIZENS COMMISSION ON THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE REPORT OF THIS BI-PARTISAN GROUP WILL SOON BE MADE PUBLIC. THIS REPORT WILL OFFER OVER 40 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REORGANIZATION OF THE LEGISLATURE, INCLUDING STREAMLINING OF THE CONSTITUTION; A SMALLER NUMBER OF COMMITTEES AND PUTTING THEIR MEMBERS TO WORK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. A SHOCKING FACT OF MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LIFE IS THAT 2 OUT OF 16 COMMITTEES IN THE HOUSE STUDY OVER 80% OF THE BILLS INTRODUCED EACH SESSION.

THE COMMISSION WILL RECOMMEND IMPROVEMENT IN RESEARCH STAFF AND FACILITIES FOR THE LEGISLATURE. THE RESULT IS BETTER STUDY OF MARYLAND'S PROBLEMS: TAXATION, EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH.

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BUT, THESE PROBLEMS CANNOT BE SOLVED BY A HUNDRED COMMISSION REPORTS UNLESS THE PEOPLE OF MARYLAND ARE NOT WILLING TO SUPPORT REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT - RECENTLY, THE VOTERS - YES, YOU AND I -

REJECTED A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO PERMIT LEGISLATORS TO SET THEIR OWN SALARIES. EACH LEGISLATOR'S ANNUAL SALARY IS \$2,400 FOR 70 DAYS' FULL-TIME WORK, PLUS THE TIME AND ATTENTION THAT WE, THE CONSTITUENTS DEMAND OF HIM 12 MONTHS A YEAR. LEGISLATORS HAVE VOTED THEMSELVES PER DIEM PAYMENTS AMOUNTING TO AN AVERAGE OF \$2,000 A YEAR AND A PENSION PLAN. THE COSTS OF THESE BENEFITS ARE NOT PUBLICLY ADVERTISED. IF WE, THE VOTERS, PERMITTED DECENT SALARIES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, THEN UNDER-THE-TABLE "GRABS" WON'T HAPPEN.

THE LEGISLATURE IS NOT VICTIMIZING MARYLAND. BUT, AN ANTIQUATED SYSTEM IS. WE, THE PEOPLE OF MARYLAND, FACE A CHOICE IN 1967: ALLOW THE LEGISLATURE TO CONTINUE ITS DECLINE IN POWER AND PRESTIGE, OR GIVE IT THE TOOLS TO DO THE JOB.

STATEMENT, WBAL-TV, FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 1966

GEORGE S. WILLS, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RECENTLY, A MEMBER OF THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES WAS OFFERED \$300 TO LEAVE THE CHAMBER DURING A CRUCIAL VOTE. THIS DELEGATE REFUSED THE MONEY, BUT THE FACT THAT HE WAS OFFERED A BRIBE SHOWS JUST HOW LOW THE MARYLAND LEGISLATURE HAS FALLEN. A COMMISSION ON THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS NOW STUDYING MARYLAND'S LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: LENGTH OF SESSION, SALARIES, COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION, PROFESSIONAL STAFFING, PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND EXECUTIVE INFLUENCE - ALL DIRECTED TOWARD THE BASIC PROBLEM: A CRYING NEED FOR LEGISLATORS WHO PROPERLY REPRESENT THE PEOPLE. IT IS OBVIOUS FROM THE COMMISSION'S HEARINGS THAT LEGISLATIVE REFORM IS NECESSARY.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES, THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE SENATE, THREE CONGRESSMEN, BOTH MARYLAND'S UNITED STATES SENATORS, AND THE GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND, HAVE GONE ON RECORD BEFORE THE COMMISSION WITH SPECIFIC PROPOSALS TO MODERNIZE OUR LEGISLATURE. AS CHAIRMAN OF THIS COMMISSION,

(more)

STATEMENT, WBAL-TV

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I HAVE EXTENDED INVITATIONS TO ALL MAJOR GUBERNATORIAL
CANDIDATES---REPUBLICAN, DEMOCRATIC, INDEPENDENT---TO TESTIFY
AND SO PUT THEMSELVES ON THE RECORD.

ONLY STRONG STATE GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP MARYLAND "THE
FREE STATE" AND NOT AN ANNEX TO THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE COMMISSION WILL ISSUE A ^{COMPLETE}~~COMPREHENSIVE~~ REPORT--
THE FIRST INDEPENDENT, CITIZENS' ORIENTED STUDY OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY. THIS REPORT WILL URGE COMPREHENSIVE REVISION OF
MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE PRACTICES. IT MUST BE IMPLEMENTED.

CITIZENS' COMMISSION REPORT ON
LEGISLATURE PUBLISHED. WILLS URGES
IMMEDIATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION FOR
YEAR-ROUND COMMITTEE WORK

The Citizens' Commission on the General Assembly has submitted its final published report to the Legislature and 5,000 business, civic and government leaders throughout the State of Maryland. Commission Chairman George S. Wills presented the first copies of the Report to Governor Spiro T. Agnew, Senate President William James and House Speaker Marvin Mandel. In the presentation ceremonies held today in Governor Agnew's office, Mr. Wills stated that "the Legislature has taken a great step forward by introducing a resolution that provides for study of the Commission's proposals - and those of the Eagleton Institute - during the next six months. However, there are some essential steps that must be taken immediately if the General Assembly is to operate at a reasonable efficiency during the interim period before convening next January."

Wills cited as a "must" the "approval of an administrative procedure whereby major committees of the Senate and House meet on a regular basis after the present session ends. Legislative oversight of the Executive Budget, research on programs and preparation of bills, and just plain efficiency dictate continuing committee work throughout the year."

In calling for year-round committee work, Wills noted that a survey taken by the Citizens Commission and analyzed in its Report, reveals that 100 percent of Maryland's legislators (1963-1966 sessions) interviewed would be willing to meet with their committee on a continuing basis outside the regular session."

The Chairman of the Wills Commission further called for legislative decision this session on pre-filing of bills, hiring at least one

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professional research analyst for each major committee between sessions, and provision for some office assistance for Senate and House delegations between sessions. He noted that it is improper for some delegations not to have adequate staff assistance while others have been given deserved help by their respective counties.

Wills further cautioned "that any staff allotments must be accompanied by a corresponding system of verification and public accounting, in order to maintain public confidence in the Legislature."

Wills concluded by announcing the Commission will issue a series of supplemental recommendations. The first of these recommendations will concern itself with "justifiable and unjustifiable between-session expenditures."

The Report of the Citizens Commission has been financed by contributions from the Citizens Conference of State Legislatures through the Ford and Carnegie Foundations, ten Maryland corporations, and the Young Democratic Clubs of Maryland. It includes in its membership 50 business, civic, and governmental leaders. For the past year, the Commission has taken testimony from over 40 legislative and political leaders, among them Governor Agnew, former Governor Tawes, Senate President James, Speaker Mandel, Senators Brewster and Tydings, and all the major gubernatorial candidates during the 1966 primary and general elections.

For further information, please call Citizens Commission on the General Assembly, 467-6382 or 823-9243.

